

# THEODORE WENDEL

*An American Impressionist*

1859-1932



# BIOGRAPHY

- 1859 July 19, born Midway, Ohio, son of Carl Daniel Wendel.
- 1876–77 Studied art at University of Cincinnati's School of Design (later known as The Art Academy).
- 1878–79 Studied at Royal Academy, Munich, where he won a medal.
- 1879 Joined Frank Duveneck's class ("Duveneck's Boys") at Polling, Germany.
- 1879–81 With the class to Florence in winters, Venice in summers. Met Whistler in Venice. Did his first etchings.
- 1881 Probably returned to U.S.
- 1883–84 In Newport, Rhode Island, sharing studio with Kenyon Cox.
- 1885 or '86 To Paris; studied briefly at Académie Julien.
- 1886–87 Summers at Giverny; met Monet; winters in Paris. Did his first Impressionist paintings.
- 1888 Returned to U.S.
- 1889–90 In Newport. May have revisited Europe in 1890–91.
- 1892–97 In Boston at 239 Pleasant Square. Taught at Cowles Art School and Wellesley College.
- 1897 Married Philena Stone.
- 1897–99 Wedding trip to France and Italy. Daughter Mary born Venice, 1897.



Theodore Wendel (detail) by Frank Duveneck. Location unknown.

- 1899 Settled on farm at Ipswich, Massachusetts. Son Daniel born. Lived there rest of his life, but kept a studio in Boston for some years.
- 1909 Won Sesnan Medal at Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.
- 1915 Won silver medal at Panama-Pacific International Exposition, San Francisco. One-man exhibition at Guild of Boston Artists.
- 1917 Illness. Less painting thereafter.
- 1932 December 19, died at Ipswich.

*This exhibition was made possible with funds provided by the Historic Art Associates of the Whitney Museum for documenting and presenting American art of the past.*

# INTRODUCTION

IN FEBRUARY 1975, the writer received an answer to a letter written thirty-seven years earlier. Signed Daniel S. Wendel, it said in part: "When your letter of October 25, 1937, was sent to Theodore Wendel (my father) in Ipswich, Mass., he had recently died and in moving his things some papers were put in my barn, among them your letter. The papers became lost among bits of panelling and other remnants of old houses which I had saved. . . . They have only now come to light."

Thus began the long delayed research started when I was curator at the Brooklyn Museum. It has finally led to the present showing of Theodore Wendel's work—his first one-man exhibition in a museum—and to the forthcoming article "Introducing Theodore Wendel" (*Art in America*, November–December, 1976).

Except for Mary Cassatt, who had allied herself with the French Impressionists by 1878, Wendel was indeed one of the first to adopt the new style. He and John Leslie Breck met Claude Monet at Giverny in 1886, and were both influenced by him. They were followed there during the next three years by Theodore Robinson, John Singer Sargent, Willard Metcalf, Theodore

Earl Butler and Lilla Cabot Perry. Wendel's first Impressionist paintings of 1886–87 precede theirs. All are Giverny subjects—meadows, farms, streams and willows. Gently lyrical in feeling, they are less brilliant technically than the French master's work (true of all the Americans) but create their own very genuine poetry.

Back in America, Wendel refined his art, experimenting with freer handling and higher color—perhaps in response to the character of American light and atmosphere. Some of his most successful canvases were painted in Ipswich between 1900 and 1915. A serious illness in 1917 brought his painting career virtually to a close, although a few interesting works were produced later.

During his lifetime Wendel enjoyed some fame: he won medals at several large exhibitions, had a two-man show with Theodore Robinson at a Boston gallery and a one-man show at the Guild of Boston Artists. But a national reputation eluded him, and since his death his work has fallen into deeper obscurity. It seems time to look again at these intimate small paintings, so fresh in light and color, and to reevaluate their creator.

JOHN I. H. BAUR

## CHECKLIST

All dimensions are given in inches, height preceding width.

1. *Venice*, 1881. OIL ON CANVAS, 5 x 13. Mr. and Mrs. Daniel S. Wendel.
2. *Farm Scene*, 1886. OIL ON CANVAS, 13  $\frac{1}{8}$  x 22. Mr. and Mrs. Daniel S. Wendel.
3. *Girl with Turkeys*, 1886. OIL ON CANVAS, 23  $\frac{1}{2}$  x 28  $\frac{7}{8}$ . Mr. and Mrs. Daniel S. Wendel.
4. *Giverny Farm*, c. 1886. OIL ON CANVAS, 15 x 18. Mr. and Mrs. Daniel S. Wendel.
5. *Brook, Giverny*, 1887. OIL ON CANVAS, 28  $\frac{1}{2}$  x 35  $\frac{1}{2}$ . Mr. and Mrs. Daniel S. Wendel.
6. *Willows*, c. 1887. OIL ON WOOD PANEL, 13  $\frac{1}{2}$  x 16  $\frac{7}{8}$ . Mr. and Mrs. Daniel S. Wendel.
7. *Pollards*, c. 1887. OIL ON CANVAS ON WOOD PANEL, 14  $\frac{1}{2}$  x 11  $\frac{1}{8}$ . Mr. and Mrs. Daniel S. Wendel.
8. *Apples*, c. 1890 (?). OIL ON CANVAS, 20  $\frac{1}{2}$  x 23. Mr. and Mrs. Daniel S. Wendel.
9. *Woman Reading*, c. 1895. OIL ON CANVAS ON WOOD PANEL, 20  $\frac{3}{8}$  x 14  $\frac{1}{2}$ . Mr. and Mrs. James R. Marsh.
10. *Gloucester*, 1892-96. OIL ON CANVAS ON WOOD PANEL, 17  $\frac{1}{2}$  x 29  $\frac{1}{2}$ . Mr. and Mrs. Daniel S. Wendel.
11. *Girl by the Sea*, 1894-96. OIL ON CANVAS, 8  $\frac{1}{2}$  x 18. Mr. and Mrs. James R. Marsh.
12. *Portrait of the Artist's Wife*, c. 1897. OIL ON CANVAS, 11  $\frac{1}{4}$  x 9  $\frac{1}{4}$ . Mr. and Mrs. James R. Marsh.
13. *The Butterfly Catchers*, 1906. OIL ON CANVAS, 26  $\frac{1}{8}$  x 36  $\frac{1}{8}$ . Mr. and Mrs. Daniel S. Wendel.
14. *The Marsh*, c. 1906. OIL ON CANVAS, 17 x 25. Mr. and Mrs. Daniel S. Wendel.
15. *Bridge at Ipswich*, c. 1908. OIL ON CANVAS, 24  $\frac{1}{4}$  x 30. Mr. and Mrs. Daniel S. Wendel.
16. *The Lower River, Ipswich*, c. 1908. OIL ON CANVAS, 30  $\frac{1}{2}$  x 37  $\frac{1}{2}$ . Mr. and Mrs. Daniel S. Wendel.
17. *Winter Scene*, 1912-14. OIL ON CANVAS, 24  $\frac{1}{2}$  x 30  $\frac{3}{4}$ . Mr. and Mrs. James R. Marsh.
18. *Haying, Ipswich*, c. 1914. OIL ON CANVAS, 29  $\frac{1}{2}$  x 40. Mr. and Mrs. James R. Marsh.
19. *Pitching Hay*, 1912-15. OIL ON CANVAS, 25  $\frac{1}{2}$  x 32  $\frac{1}{2}$ . Mr. and Mrs. James R. Marsh.
20. *Haying*, 1912-15. OIL ON CANVAS, 24 x 32. Vose Galleries of Boston.
21. *Winter on the Upper Farm*, c. 1925. OIL ON CANVAS, 30  $\frac{1}{2}$  x 36  $\frac{1}{4}$ . Mr. and Mrs. Daniel S. Wendel.
22. *Canal Scene with Figures*, 1881. ETCHING, 9  $\frac{1}{4}$  x 7 (plate). Mr. and Mrs. Daniel S. Wendel.
23. *Palazzo, Venice*, 1881. ETCHING, 10  $\frac{1}{8}$  x 6  $\frac{7}{8}$  (plate). Mr. and Mrs. Daniel S. Wendel.
24. *Canal San Biaggio, Venice*, 1882. ETCHING, 10 x 6  $\frac{7}{8}$  (plate). Mr. and Mrs. Daniel S. Wendel.

Whitney Museum of American Art  
945 Madison Avenue at 75th Street  
New York, N. Y. 10021  
Telephone (212) 794-0600

October 16-December 5, 1976

Cover: *Bridge at Ipswich*, c. 1908.  
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Daniel S. Wendel.